

Week of July 26, 2021

## **NATIONAL, HILL AND DC NEWS:**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended Tuesday that some people vaccinated against COVID-19 resume wearing face masks indoors as new data indicates fully vaccinated individuals can spread the dangerous delta variant. The rising threat of infection led the agency to say that individuals in areas of “high” or “substantial” transmission of COVID-19 should wear masks indoors, whether or not they are vaccinated.

The CDC defines high transmission as more than 100 new cases per 100,000 people in the past seven days. Nearly half — 1,496 — of U.S. counties are at this high level of transmission, according to CDC data. Over 17 percent of other counties are currently at levels of substantial transmission, with 50 to 99 new cases per 100,000 people over the past seven days.

Based on the CDC’s recommendation, mask mandates are returning to the House and the White House, while the Senate is being strongly encouraged to use high-quality face coverings as well to help slow down the delta variant of COVID-19. Attending Physician Brian Monahan’s messages to the House and Senate made the same substantive point, that the new guidance this week from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention regarding indoor mask use by fully vaccinated individuals in areas where the virus is spreading has led him to recommend that Congress follow suit.

The message to the House goes further, reinstating requirements for wearing face masks in the hall of the House, the House office buildings. Members are permitted to temporarily remove them when recognized by the chair to speak. The House sergeant-at-arms is authorized and directed to impose fines for violations of this policy.

Over at the White House, staff moved quickly on Tuesday to restore the mask requirements following the formal announcement by CDC Director Rochelle Walensky of the updated guidance. The guidance is based in part on new research suggesting that the viral load of the delta variant may be significantly greater in vaccinated people — though the vaccines clearly provide protection against hospitalization and death.

Thursday President Biden declared that federal workers and contractors will have to declare their vaccination status against COVID-19 or use additional public health precautions. This signals a more aggressive stance against the evolving virus. “With freedom comes responsibility, and your decision not to get vaccinated impacts someone

else,” Biden said in a national address highlighting the risks for unvaccinated people and society at large.

Those who are unvaccinated will have to wear a mask on the job, regardless of the level of transmission of the virus in their geographic regions; keep a physical distance from other employees and visitors; and undergo weekly or twice-weekly testing for the coronavirus. Since the federal government is the country’s largest employer, experts say the move provides political cover for state and local governments to do the same, and gives more leeway to private employers, too. The administration is urging private sector employers to follow its example.

Wednesday, a bipartisan group of senators announced they reached a deal on an infrastructure spending package – the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act – that would add nearly \$550 billion in new spending, including \$284 billion for transportation infrastructure and \$264 billion for other infrastructure areas such as power, broadband, and water. These figures come on top of extensions of current highway and other funding.

The framework claims at least \$539 billion of offsets, or at least \$483 billion of offsets excluding dynamic scoring, to pay for the bill. However, many of these pay-fors appear to overstate savings or count savings that have already occurred. Therefore, we believe the offsets will only cover about half the claimed cost of the legislation.

Reported offsets would come from repurposing COVID relief funds, reducing unemployment fraud, lowering prescription drug costs, reducing the tax gap through cryptocurrency information reporting, selling spectrum frequencies, imposing or extending various fees, and other sources.

Lawmakers claim these policies will save at least \$483 billion and that the legislation will boost economic growth enough to generate an additional \$56 billion of savings. Along with savings from unemployment insurance fraud reduction, this \$539 billion of reported offsets might be enough to cover the \$550 billion of new spending. Some believe actual savings would be lower, only covering about half of the new spending overall.

Democratic Senator Sherrod Brown (OH) and other powerful Democrats in Congress, along with disability and aging advocates, want to increase SSI benefits as part of their \$3.5 trillion budget reconciliation package, which they can pass along party lines over Republican opposition. If they are successful, this would be the biggest update to SSI benefits in decades. SSI currently has 7.8 million Americans enrolled. The SSI enhancements, when combined with Biden’s proposed Social Security reforms, would lift 1.4 million people out of poverty in 2021 alone, according to an Urban Institute analysis.

President Biden announced Monday that serious long-term Covid-19 cases could qualify as a disability, making federal protections and resources available to those suffering from the disease. Speaking at an event at the White House celebrating the 31st anniversary

of the Americans with Disabilities Act, he said that lingering Covid symptoms, such as fatigue or brain fog, "can sometimes rise to the level of a disability."

"We're bringing agencies together to make sure Americans with long Covid who have a disability have access to the rights and resources that are due under the disability law, which includes accommodations and services in the workplace and school, and our health care system so they can live their lives in dignity," Biden said. The departments of Health and Human Services, Justice, Education and Labor released guidelines to help individuals experiencing effects of long-term Covid navigate federal benefits.

The guidance makes clear, however, that the so-called long Covid does not automatically qualify as a disability. The HHS guidance says that an "individualized assessment is necessary to determine whether a person's long Covid condition or any of its symptoms substantially limits a major life activity." The guidance says people with long Covid could qualify for "reasonable modifications" at work or in schools, as well as community-based resources that help with medical care and housing.

### **DIRECTOR NEWS:**

We have two very seasoned accomplished Directors who have announced retirement plans for this fall. They are Brian Sigman of CT B and David Mitchell of IA G. They are both champions for VR in their state and at the national level. They have both been leaders within CSAVR and in Brian's case also NCSAB. Both are strong advocates for what they believe. These leaders will be greatly missed.

Iowa is beginning their search for the director position. Please feel free to pass this along to friends and colleagues in your network. Posting for Iowa VR Administrator

One thing this does bring to mind is that leaders change. As a leader, one of our responsibilities is to prepare and nurture that next generation of leadership. If you have not given thought to succession planning within your agency whether it be for your position or others, please do so to ensure there continue to be strong leadership in your agency and for the national program. Thank you.

### **TIP OF THE WEEK:**

A VR agency may not impose a duration of residency requirement with respect to the eligibility of any individual who is present in the state (Section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.42(c)(1)). In addition, a VR agency may not establish policies that prohibit the provision of out-of-state services to eligible individuals (34 CFR 361.50(b)(2)). The person must be present in the state and available to participate in the VR process.

### **NET UPDATE:**

(SHhhhh....don't tell anyone, but Kathy West Evans and John Evans have a BIG anniversary this weekend) 😊

**Pitney Bowes:** Our partners at Dell introduced Pitney Bowes to the NET. The NET members from NJ, CA, GA, IN, KY, WI and PA joined Kathy and Inger along with the Pitney Bowes team on Monday, July 26<sup>th</sup>. They learned more about the package handler and mail sorter roles as well as begin to build the working relationships at the local level in these specific areas and discussed having on-site tours so that the local teams are familiar with the work environment.

Monroe, New Jersey (Package Handlers)  
Bloomington, California (Package Handlers)  
Atlanta, Georgia (Package Handlers)  
Greenwood, Indiana (Package Handlers)  
Hebron, Kentucky (Package Handlers)  
Erlanger, Kentucky (Package Handlers)  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Mail Sorters)  
Reading, Pennsylvania (Mail Sorters)

**NETworking:** We have completed two of the NETworking sessions --- Amazon and Marriott. They are both posted on the YesLMS platform. You should have received those links, if not please let Inger or I know.

As you know we are working on a series of webinars with our business partners and will also include a session on the NET and one on TAP. These will all be stored on the YesLMS platform so that they can be accessed by anyone on your business team or other VR staff that want to learn more about the business. Please note: the NET point of contact will remain the key connection. The webinars simply focus on a company overview, delivered by the business customer so that you can help educate your VRCs and candidates, if you chose to go that route. In a couple of the sessions the businesses have also asked for us to provide a briefing on the NET, they are sharing these links internally with their staff to help them better understand the NET and VR Business Services.

## **Upcoming Events-**

**Next NETworking Session:** Save the Date - **Mutual of Omaha** - August 11<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 Noon Pacific/1:00 p.m. Mountain/2:00 p.m. Central/3:00 p.m. Eastern. Thank you to Mary on the Nebraska team and Kevan with Missouri for making this introduction!

**TAP Virtual Career Fair:** **Amazon** is streaming their positions onto TAP and will hold a Virtual Career Fair on September 30<sup>th</sup>, more details to follow.

**MOD Pizza:** The NETworking series included a meeting with MOD Pizza this week to discuss opportunities in their key locations, including: AZ, CA, DE, FL, ID, IL, IN, MD, MO, NJ, , NC, OR, PA, TX, UT, VA, WA and WI. In addition to their 500 stores operated in these states they also have close to 100 franchises. MOD Pizza is a company that

values “grit, growth, gratitude and generosity.” Founded in 2008 they have focused on providing opportunities to a number of groups that are often overlooked, including those with a history of incarceration. One of their key message is that “talent is everywhere but opportunities if not.” This aligns well with the VR-NET. They have also started opening opportunities for minors (age 16-17) to help support early work experience and had experience working with job coaches. Thank you to the Oregon team for the introduction and to Virginia for sharing their positive relationships with MOD in their state!

The session and additional materials have been posted to the YesLMS site for these 28 key locations.

**Eagle Family Foods:** The NET partners at Accessible Pharmacy introduced Kathy to Eagle Family Foods. She in turn connected them to the NET POCs in IL and WI to tour their packaging facility and begin recruiting a range of talent from those two areas.

**COMPASS Group/Canteen:** The NET continues to host monthly check-in with Canteen, as our partnership grows across the nation with recent hires in Wisconsin, Florida, and potential hires in New York with planning and talent source development in California. We are currently coordinating with Florida Blind, New Jersey, and Texas.

**CONMED** is a global medical technology company that specializes in the development and sale of surgical and patient monitoring products and services that allow our physicians customers to deliver high quality care and as a result, enhanced clinical outcomes for their patients. ConMed was referred to the NET by one of their internal benefits team members in Washington State who is familiar with CSAVR the NET. ConMed requested to start building our partnership with their facility in Lithia Springs, Georgia. After meeting with their HR/Recruiting Specialist in Georgia we have been asked to assist with a 2-prong strategy to create an inclusive work environment and recruit of qualified candidates. First, we will assist with Disability Awareness by presenting Windmills Training to their Leadership team, front line management and then employees. Second, we will facilitate meeting with Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA) Employment Coordinator Paul Workman to assist with talent sourcing of appropriate candidates.

**NASA:** The NET is coordinating with Texas POC Melinda Paninski and her team to share information with other POC’s, our goal is building a national partnership with NASA. Several states have reported successful employment outcomes with NASA however few have been able to develop a partnership. We have a NET POC’s zoom meeting scheduled in August (date to be announced soon) where Texas will share information on best practices in developing a partnership, tips on recruiting interns and potential candidates with the intent to create consistency across the country.

The following are states with a NASA presence (however all of our POC’s are welcomed

to attend the informational session): Alabama, California, Florida, Maryland, Mississippi, Minnesota, Ohio, Virginia and Washington DC

**TAP Training Report Week of July 26-30, 2021** - TAP reports provide more information on which candidates are applying thru the system as of July 29, 2021, we had 61 applications the majority are from Illinois, Michigan, NENA and Florida (B) VR systems.

Top states that added new candidates already this month are Michigan 32, FLA (B) 23 and Oklahoma 13.

Provided training to New Hampshire CRP staff on how to assist candidates with completing resumes.

Providing training to Illinois Management/Supervisor staff to engage them in supporting TAP utilization with counseling staff. Will be providing training to counselors/placement staff in the coming month. They already added a few new candidates that applied for 10 jobs this week!

Demo VR&E Employment staff so that they can see the full functionality of the system and to discuss training options.

Meeting with Wells Fargo to set up dates for Virtual Job Fair

Working on FAQ document and some additional documents that I use for training so that we can upload into TAP or the CSAVR LMS system.

### **RSA UPDATE:**

RSA has developed a [VR Program Reference Guide](#) on [rsa.ed.gov](http://rsa.ed.gov). This guide provides an orientation to information and technical assistance resources that will assist State VR agency leadership in the effective administration and management of VR programs.

RSA has now completed 41 of 52 actions, or 79 percent of all actions, outlined in its [ReThink VR Performance Plan](#).

Please contact your [RSA State Liaison](#) with any questions or feedback related to any other technical assistance tools that could support you and the important mission of the VR program.

On Friday, July 30<sup>th</sup> from 1 to 2 pm ET, RSA will hold a pre-applicant teleconference for Assistance Listing Number (ALN) 84.160D, Training of Interpreters for Individuals Who Are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Individuals Who Are DeafBlind program. Applicants may

register at this link: <https://ems8.intellor.com?do=register&t=1&p=840225> . You can submit written questions in advance, as soon as possible, at: [160D@ed.gov](mailto:160D@ed.gov).

On July 26, 2021, the Federal Register published a Notice of Final Priority (NFP) and Notice Inviting Applications (NIA) for ALN 84.160D. The purpose of this competition is to provide training to working interpreters in order to develop a new skill area or enhance an existing skill area. **The application deadline is August 30, 2021.**

Applicants are strongly encouraged to review the key web links listed below and additional information available at the NCRTM.

Federal Register notices:

NIA: <https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2021-15914>

NFP: <https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2021-15915>

Application package and Dear Colleague letter:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=334889>

Pre-Application slide deck and general information for RSA Discretionary Grant Competitions:

<https://ncrtm.ed.gov/RSAGrantInfo.aspx>

## **RESEARCH NEWS, REPORTS, WEBINARS, CONFERENCES, ETC.:**

On August 26 from 9 to 4 pm Georgia VRA invites you to attend the first annual GVRA Stakeholder Summit. This event will allow GVRA partners to learn more about how they're serving Georgians with disabilities and engage in a dialogue with staff about how to best accomplish our shared mission moving forward. [the agenda can be found here](#). To register to attend either remotely or in person, simply [click this link](#) and fill out the form. The link can also be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/GVRASummit2021>. Please address all questions to [stakeholdersummit@gvs.ga.gov](mailto:stakeholdersummit@gvs.ga.gov).

The [Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Employment of People Who are Blind or Have Low Vision \(90RTEM0007\)](#) is recruiting individuals who are blind or have low vision to be part of a [five-year study on access technology \(AT\) use in the workplace](#). Participants must be over 21 years old and may either be employed or not employed but interested in working. Currently unemployed individuals are encouraged to apply. Participants will complete multiple surveys to help researchers determine how AT use is changing over time. Participants will receive a gift card after each completed survey. Interested participants must [complete a screening survey online](#) or by phone at 662/325-2001.

Join Mathematica's Center for Studying Disability Policy on **Tuesday, August 24**, from **noon to 1:30 p.m. ET** for a webinar on lessons learned from Vermont's Linking

Learning to Careers initiative that can inform how other programs enhance their transition programs. This webinar will include discussions with program leaders, transition team members, technical assistance providers, and evaluators. You will also hear from youth about their experiences in the Linking Learning to Careers program.

The Great Lakes ADA Regional Center (90DP0091) will host a webcast, Accessible Pedestrian Trails and Shared Use Paths, August 5th, 2:30-4 pm ET. Presenters will review the differences between accessible pedestrian trails and shared use paths. Presenters will review the technical and scoping requirements in the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) Accessibility Standards for newly constructed or altered pedestrian trails on federal sites, as well as proposed supplementary provisions for shared use paths. No registration is required to view the YouTube Livestream.

The Mid-Atlantic ADA Regional Center (90DP0089) will host a webinar, Health Conditions and College: Accommodations, Considerations, and Information, August 10th, 2-3:30 pm ET. Presenters will examine high school to college transition for students with disabilities and explore disability statistics related to college. Presenters will also discuss the college search process, the accommodation process, and considerations for students with health conditions and their role in the process. Presenters will also share the experiences of two students with health conditions in relation to self-advocacy, self-advocacy fatigue, and support networks. Registration is free and required. Continuing education recognition is available for a fee.

In partnership with the Institute on Community Integration at University of Minnesota and University of Colorado at the Anschutz Medical Campus, ICI's StateData.info has released 30 Years of Community Living for Individuals with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities. This historical account illustrates the opportunities and challenges people with IDD experience using data from three longitudinal data projects funded under the ACL's Projects of National Significance program. This report includes infographics, stories, photos, and personal experiences from people with IDD at work and in communities across the US. Read more about the 30-year history of community living or download the report.

As more students with intellectual disability (ID) enroll in college, instructors are learning more about how to create inclusive classroom experiences. ICI researchers Allison Taylor, Daria Domin, Clare Papay, and Meg Grigal published a paper, "More dynamic, more engaged": Faculty perspectives on instructing students with intellectual disability in inclusive courses" in the Journal of Inclusive Post-Secondary Education. Read more about the benefits and challenges of inclusive education from the perspectives of college instructors

Beginning July 1, the ICI will partner with Jobs for the Future and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development under two 4-year US Department of Labor awards to diversify and transform Registered Apprenticeship programs. ICI's

role with both projects will focus on making apprenticeships more inclusive of individuals with disabilities.

**August 5 and 6, 2021**, the Social Security Administration will hold its annual meeting of the Retirement and Disability Research Consortium. This year's meeting will be held virtually. The agenda features a lineup of disability policy researchers.

The ICI collects employment data from state intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) agencies, the vocational rehabilitation (VR) system, the Social Security Administration, US Census, the Department of Labor, and other entities to describe trends in day and employment services for individuals with IDD. Their Blue Book can help you use this data to guide policy and practice change, research, advocacy, and employment services and supports. With StateData's tools, you can find, sort, and analyze data related to employment for people with IDD. Learn more from the StateData Blue Book:

- How does your state compare? [Read your State Snapshot](#).
- Want to learn about data from different agencies? Browse our [publications by data source](#) under the Publications and Analysis section.
- Compare data trends within states and nationally: Try our ["Build a Chart" Tool](#).
- Read our Executive [Blue Book summary](#) in Data Note 71

Get the full picture: Download the [Blue Book](#)

Daria Domin from the ICI and Diane Golden, partner from the Center for Assistive Technology Act Data Assistance (CATADA), published a brief, "[Why Data Matters: How Your Assistive Technology Data Can Work for You](#)." This brief offers real-world examples to guide assistive technology program staff through how to use their data meaningfully to advance program goals.

Join Agency Workforce Management for a webinar on August 5<sup>th</sup> at 2 pm ET to learn how to use scheduling to support your employees and managers, reduce absenteeism, increase retention and productivity, and how to use scheduling to minimize overtime and maximize authorization utilization. [Register for the Webinar](#)

[Navigating the CareerOneStop Suite of Career Tools: A Roadmap](#)

The suite of tools available in CareerOneStop provide solutions for unemployed workers, career counselors, economic developers, educators, parents, students, businesses, workforce professionals, and job seekers. This how-to-guide is [A Skills Roadmap for Case Managers](#) that helps anyone navigate through the tools in CareerOnestop.org.

[Amid Accelerated Shifts in the Job Search, Much Remains the Same](#)

Resources identified with The Adapting to Change theme address the workforce challenges with changes in policy, procedures, and processes.

The EMPLOYER'S STIGMATIZING ATTITUDES TOWARD CANCER SURVIVORS SCALE is a brief, 6-item questionnaire that may serve as a useful measure of employer stigma that can be used in future demand-side research related to cancer survivorship and employment. **Learn more about how understanding stigma can lay the foundation for creating interventions to combat stigma.**

*Barriers to public transportation and employment: A national survey of individuals with disabilities. Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling (JARC), Volume 50(3), Pgs. 174-185. NARIC Accession Number: J86021. New to the NARIC collection, this NIDILRR-funded study investigated the relationship between public transportation barriers and employment status among a national sample of 3,218 individuals with disabilities. In a web-based survey, approximately 89.7 percent of respondents reported experiencing at least one barrier to using public transportation, with an average of 3.39 barriers per person. Individuals with disabilities who were not employed experienced significantly more barriers than those who were employed, and this difference was most prominent among those who were deaf or hard of hearing. The findings corroborate previous reports of the association between transportation and employment, but further specify that individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing may be disproportionately affected by public transportation barriers. Access the full abstract and ordering information in REHABDATA.*

The Southeast ADA Regional Center (90DP0090) launched the Disability Rights Today podcast series. The series explores the facts, issues, and arguments of important court cases that have shaped the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and how these cases may have changed the legal rights and lives of people with disabilities. Each episode includes plaintiffs, attorneys, and subject matter experts involved in the highlighted case. The most recent episode covers Crawford v. Hinds County Board of Supervisors and includes discussion of jury duty and courthouse access.

Congratulations to the IDeA Center at the University of Buffalo, home to several current and completed NIDILRR-funded projects on universal design, on their receipt of the Leadership Award from the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America (RESNA). The Leadership Award recognizes an agency, company, association, or university for their significant contributions to the advancement of the field of assistive technology and rehabilitation engineering and their recognition and support of RESNA.

Webinar: *Telework in Action: A Disability Inclusion Practice Whose Time Has Arrived* offered by the Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN) on August 12, 2021 / 2:00 – 3:00 PM Eastern Time. This webinar will focus on how organizations and employees have adapted to telework and how it will remain an integral part of the workplace of the future. Guest speakers will discuss the many benefits of telework, including cost savings, increased productivity of employees, and expanded access to a qualified talent pool of people with disabilities. Participants will also learn

about providing accommodations remotely and ensuring accessibility of recruiting, onboarding, communication, and training platforms. To access online registration, please visit. <https://askearn.org/event/telework-in-action/>

Webinar: *CareerOneStop: Workforce Professionals Toolkit* offered by WorkforceGPS on August 19, 2021 / 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM Eastern Time. This webinar will provide information and examples on how Workforce Professionals can utilize CareerOneStop in their work with clients. The staff of CareerOneStop will provide information and examples of some of the more common tools available on CareerOneStop, as well as other tools that are not as well known. This webinar is targeted for Workforce Professionals. Registration for this event is limited and seating is on a first-come, first-served basis. <https://www.workforcegps.org/events/2021/07/28/13/30/CareerOneStop-Workforce-Professionals-Toolkit>

Webinar Archive: *A Second Chance at Inclusion: People with Disabilities, Work, and Re-entry after Incarceration*: People with disabilities are dramatically overrepresented in our nation's prisons and jails. Access the webinar archive to learn about effective practices, partnerships, and policies that support transition to employment for individuals with disabilities formerly involved in the justice system. <http://leadcenter.org/webinars/second-chance-inclusion-people-disabilities-work-and-re-entry-after-incarceration>

*Accommodating Deaf and Hard of Hearing Employees in Virtual Meetings* from the Job Accommodation Network: Article to learn more about accommodation options for virtual meetings. <https://askjan.org/articles/Accommodating-Deaf-and-Hard-of-Hearing-Employees-in-Virtual-Meetings.cfm>

*Sample Language for Accommodation Request Letters* from the Job Accommodation Network: Article to learn more about writing accommodation requests including examples. <https://askjan.org/articles/Sample-Language-for-Accommodation-Request-Letters.cfm>

SVRI is offering online CRC Exam Preparation workshop. The dates are August 5 to September 30, 2021 and the cost is \$250.00. From Jan 6–Mar 3, 2022 they will offer the workshop again for Mar 4–12, 2022 Exam Dates.

**On Thursday, August 19, 2021 from 11:00 AM-12:30 PM ET** the staff of CareerOneStop will provide information and examples of some of the more common tools available on CareerOneStop, as well as other tools that are not as well known. This webinar is targeted for Workforce Professionals. **Registration for this event is limited and seating is on a first-come, first-served basis; please register today. Register Now**

The Institute for Community Inclusion has announced two new learning sessions for leadership of state vocational rehabilitation agencies conducting employer engagement. The Innovative Guided Rehabilitation Employer Engagement Training (iGREET) was

developed through a grant from the Rehabilitation Service Administration. The iGREET curriculum is designed to enhance staff performance in business relationships leading to more successful employment outcomes for job seekers with disabilities and their employers. The iGREET team is pleased to provide brief training sessions for senior leadership and for supervisors. These sessions will give information on the training available to direct staff, but also include information directly applicable to the roles of leaders and supervisors.

### **iGREET Session for Senior Leadership**

**September 14, 2021, (2:00 – 3:30 PM EDT)**

**Register by August 13, 2021.**

### **iGREET Session for Supervisors**

**September 21, 2021, (3:30 – 5:00 PM EDT)**

**Register by August 13, 2021.**

### **ICI State Learning Collaboratives:**

The Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston is excited to announce that applications are now being accepted for the 2021-2022 State Learning Collaborative, an activity of IT'S Employment, an RSA funded project focused on improving employment outcomes for individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID).

The State Learning Collaborative (SLC) will provide training for selected VR agencies and their partners, customized to their specific needs, in order to enhance knowledge and strengthen partnerships that are key to employment success for individuals with ID. The SLC will include training customized to the state's goals and a six-month, state specific Community of Practice. The online application is now open and includes more detailed information about the SLC. An informational webinar will be held on August 5 at 3:00 ET. Registration is required. Contact David Hoff if you have questions or need additional information.

### **GRANT NEWS:**

A Grant Notice Forecast for the Field Initiated Projects Program: Minority-Serving Institution (MSI)- Research (Opportunity # HHS-2022- ACL-NIDILRR-1FST-0010) and Development (Opportunity # HHS-2020-ACL-NIDILRR-1FST-0011) has been published on the Grants.gov website.

To locate the forecasts, please click on the following link <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html> and insert 93.433 in the CFDA field. Important information related to this opportunity is located below:

Eligible Applicants: Minority entities and Native American tribal governments (federally recognized) as authorized by section 21(b)(2)(A) of the Act. Estimated Application Due Date is Not Announced yet. The Estimated Award Date is September 01, 2022. Project

Period is up to 36 months. Three awards are expected with the Maximum Award Amount: \$200,000 per award for a single period of 12 months.

From Issue #57 of the NCRTM Newsletter:

#### Upcoming Events

8/4/2021 - **Virtual Talking Circle to Continue the Discussion on How an AIVRS Project Can Work with a Reentry Program To Help AIVRS Project Participants with Felony Backgrounds Obtain Employment** (AIVRTTAC)

8/26/2021 - **MOU Between the AbilityOne Commission and the Rehabilitation Services Administration** (RSA)

9/13/2021 - **Older Individuals who are Blind Technical Assistance Virtual Conference 2021** (IL-OIB-TAC)

10/30/2021 - **CSAVR Fall 2021 Conference** (CSAVR)

#### On Demand Webinars

**Subsistence Activities as an AIVRS Employment Outcome** (AIVRTTAC)

**Mental Health and American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation: Dual Diagnosis and De-Escalation** (AIVRTTAC)

**Achieving a Common Understanding of Customized Employment** (VRTAC-QM)

**Clinical Supervision Series – Module 1: Introduction to Clinical Supervision** (CIT-VR)

**Intro to Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence Interpreting** (CATIE Center)

**Customized Employment** (VRTAC-QE)

**Vocational Rehabilitation Services for Hispanic Individuals with Disabilities** (VRTAC-QE)

**Customized Training** (VRTAC-QE)

**Outreach to Rural and Migrant Communities** (VRTAC-QE)

**Motivational Interviewing Introduction** (VRTAC-QE)

The NCRTM's latest addition to the **NCRTM Accessibility Resources Page** is the **TOP TEN ESSENTIALS FOR ACCESSIBLE WEBINARS** video covering important tips for planning and delivering a webinar, presentation or online instruction that is accessible to all audiences. The NCRTM shares multiple methods of participation with tips that include captioning, ASL considerations, webinar platforms, presentations, and delivery. For quick reference, we also published a ***NCRTM Quick Checklist for Accessible***

**Webinars** to accompany the brief video.

The **NCRMT Accessibility Resources Page** is a great starting point to brush up on ways to create and remediate PDF, MS Word, PowerPoint, and Excel documents. We share brief instructional videos, quick guides, and links to the U.S. Department of Education accessibility guidelines.

New Editions is recruiting a Subject Matter Expert (SME)/Project Manager to lead the NCRMT. Candidates with extensive VR expertise and training experience are encouraged to apply. Please refer to the **position description** for further information.

### **MATHEMATICA BOARD NEWS:**

This past week Mathematica announced the appointment of Donna Levin and Judy Smythe as members of the organization's Board of Directors. Levin is the chief executive officer (CEO) of the Arthur M. Blank School for Entrepreneurial Leadership at Babson College and a co-founder of Care.com, an online marketplace that helps families across 18 countries find caregivers to provide child care, senior care, special needs care, tutoring, pet care, and housekeeping. Smythe is the head of business and operations at Aural Analytics and has nearly two decades of executive leadership experience at health care organizations, including McKesson and WebMD. At Mathematica, Levin and Smythe join 12 other board members.

### **RESPECTABILITY NEWS:**

RespectAbility is hiring! In partnership with the Fox Family Foundation, we are offering **five apprenticeships for dedicated leaders who are blind or have low vision**. This "earn while you learn" program is for people who are planning to work in careers in policy or nonprofit management that will create a better future for people who are blind or have low vision and/or other disabilities. If interested, contact: [laurena@respectability.ccsend.com](mailto:laurena@respectability.ccsend.com).

RespectAbility has new Officers and Board members:

**Ollie Cantos**, previously a Vice Chair, now takes the helm as the organizations' Chair, as the current Chair, **Steve Bartlett**'s term comes to a close. Cantos, a blind civil rights attorney, currently is Special Assistant in the Office of the Assistant Secretary at the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR).

Two new Vice Chairs have been elected: **Delbert Whetter**, a deaf film producer and executive with Exodus Film Group; and **Randall Duchesneau**, a founding member of the United Spinal Association Greater Philadelphia Chapter, who is quadriplegic from a spinal cord injury during gymnastics..

RespectAbility's Board of Advisors also welcomes three new members: **Karen Horne**, Senior VP Equity and Inclusion at WarnerMedia; **Craig Leen**, Partner at K&L Gates and former director of the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) at the

U.S. Department of Labor; **Stacie M. deArmas**, Senior Vice President, Diverse Consumer Insights & Initiatives, DEI Practice at Nielsen.

RespectAbility is deeply grateful to outgoing Vice Chair **Janet LaBreck** and board members **Richard G. Phillips, Jr.** and **Stephen Chbosky**, who are rotating onto the emeritus board after stellar service.

### **COVID 19 NEWS:**

As more than 56 million children prepare to return to U.S. schools this fall, a new analysis provides evidence that implementing routine COVID-19 testing can significantly reduce—and in some cases eliminate—in-school transmission of the virus. The report from Mathematica, funded by The Rockefeller Foundation, offers critical guidance and considerations for schools and districts as they prepare to offer routine school-based testing in the fall as part of an effort to safely reopen.

The Departments of Justice (DOJ), Health and Human Services (HHS), and Education released resources to support people who experience "long COVID," which is new or ongoing symptoms following infection with the coronavirus, including fatigue, cognitive challenges, and respiratory difficulty, among others. Guidance on "Long COVID" as a Disability Under the ADA, Section 504, and Section 1557, published by DOJ and HHS, explains that, when these symptoms substantially limit one or more major life activities, long COVID can be a disability under Titles II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as well as other laws that protect people with disabilities from discrimination. The guidance also provides resources for additional information and best practices. (Stakeholder briefing 3pm ET TODAY). Long COVID under Section 504 and the IDEA: A Resource to Support Children, Students, Educators, Schools, Service Providers, and Families (PDF), published by the Department of Education, builds on the guidance issued by DOJ and HHS and clarifies that, for young children and students, long COVID can be a disability that gives rise to Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) eligibility and may also be a disability under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the ADA.

The Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) have issued a new resource: *Long COVID under Section 504 and the IDEA: A Resource to Support Children, Students, Educators, Schools, Service Providers, and Families.*

To date, many students have contracted COVID-19 and are still experiencing its effects, in the form of what has come to be called "long COVID." The resource from OCR and OSERS builds on guidance issued by the Departments of Justice and Health and Human Services concerning long COVID as a disability and clarifies that, for young children and students, long COVID can be a disability that gives rise to Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) eligibility and may also be a disability under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. The resource reminds all members of the education community that existing procedures and protections under IDEA, Section 504, and the ADA apply to students of all ages whose long COVID is a

disability. Read more about the Department's work to support all students—including students with disabilities—as our nation continues to grapple with the impacts of COVID-19 in [our new blog post](#).

A public-private partnership Mathematica is leading in western North Carolina is [now contributing data](#) to support a federal initiative to strengthen early warning systems for COVID-19 and other infectious diseases across the country.

Recent Publications Concerning COVID from the DIEP RRTC Newsletter:

COVID-19 has had a profound impact on employment for people with disabilities in the US. In this issue of the DIEP Newsletter, we highlight six research articles. The first two articles discuss the impact of COVID on the employment rate of people with disabilities. The latter articles consider the COVID-19 crisis has taught us about how to build a more inclusive employment ecosystem.

- [Lisa Schur, J. D., van der Meulen Rodgers, Y., & Kruse, D. L. \(2021\). COVID-19 and Employment Losses for Workers with Disabilities: An Intersectional Approach. \[disabilityinclusiveemployment.org/respository/covid-19-and-employment-losses-for-workers-with-disabilities-an-intersectional-approach-a-summary/\]\(https://disabilityinclusiveemployment.org/respository/covid-19-and-employment-losses-for-workers-with-disabilities-an-intersectional-approach-a-summary/\)](#)  
In this paper, DIEP investigators study the disparate effects of COVID-19 on workers with physical and mental disabilities, paying particular attention to an intersectional analysis by disability, race/ethnicity, and gender. Results indicate that White and Black women with disabilities experienced relatively greater employment losses during the pandemic compared to White men without disabilities. Further, they found that the disability employment gap increased during the pandemic, and a substantial portion of the increased gap is explained by differential effects of the pandemic across occupations. The unexplained component of the disability gap also rose, which could partly reflect growing discrimination against people with disabilities.
- [Houtenville, A. J., Paul, S., & Brucker, D. L. \(2021\). Changes in the Employment Status of People With and Without Disabilities in the United States During the COVID-19 Pandemic. \*\*ARCHIVES OF PHYSICAL MEDICINE AND REHABILITATION\*\*. Link: \[www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0003999321003002\]\(https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0003999321003002\)](#)  
Using data from the monthly Current Population Survey, the authors provide monthly employment and unemployment statistics for people with and without disabilities in the United States from February 2020 to January 2021. The analysis finds that employment rates dropped from 74.8% to 63.2% for those without disabilities and from 31.1% to 26.4% for those with disabilities between February 2020 and April 2020 but gradually improved in the succeeding months. You can find additional data on the employment rate of people with disabilities before and during the pandemic at: <https://kesslerfoundation.org/researchcenter/disabilityemployment/nTIDE>
- [Schur, L.A., Ameri, M. & Kruse, D. \(2020\). Telework After COVID: A “Silver Lining” for Workers with Disabilities?. \*\*JOURNAL OF OCCUPATIONAL REHABILITATION\*\*, \*\*30\(521–536\)\*\*. \[link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10926-020-09936-5\]\(https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10926-020-09936-5\)](#)

DEIP Investigators point out that the pandemic shook up traditional workplace structures and caused employers to rethink how essential tasks can be done and broadened views of workplace accommodations. By analyzing several data sources, they found workers with disabilities were more likely more likely to work from home prior to the pandemic and many may benefit from expanded work-at-home opportunities, but the types of jobs they hold constrain this potential.

- **Ocean, M. (2021).** Telework during COVID-19: exposing ableism in US higher education. **DISABILITY & SOCIETY, 1-6.**  
[www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09687599.2021.1919505](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09687599.2021.1919505)

This article explores one person's perspective and experience with the accommodation process - first, as a person without a dis/ability serving as an Americans with Dis/abilities coordinator and then as a faculty member with a dis/ability. Through a powerful first-person narrative, the article describes the author's own requests for telework as a reasonable accommodation, which were denied, and her employer's subsequent ability to quickly institute telework accommodations when people without dis/abilities needed it due to COVID-19. She claims this is evidence of hypocrisy and ableism in the U.S. post-secondary educational system.

- **McNamara, K. A., & Stanch, P. M. (2021).** Accommodating workers with disabilities in the post-Covid world. **JOURNAL OF OCCUPATIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL HYGIENE, 18(4-5), 149-153.**  
[www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15459624.2021.1902531?journalCode=uoeh20](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15459624.2021.1902531?journalCode=uoeh20)

This commentary notes that the shift toward increased remote work has removed multiple barriers for some workers with disabilities, and the wide uptake of these accessible technology tools could eliminate even more barriers. But organizations need to be cognizant of the challenges around the accessibility of certain technologies and the risk of isolation for remote workers. The authors note, "it will be some time before we fully understand the impacts of 2020's rapid shift to remote work for the majority of work interactions and the impact of the pandemic on the disabled community, but this unique moment presents a historic chance to increase accessibility for workers with a range of disabilities."

- **Sheppard-Jones, K., Goldstein, P., Leslie, M., Singleton, P., Gooden, C., Rumrill, P., ... & Espinosa Bard, C. (2021).** Reframing workplace inclusion through the lens of universal design: Considerations for vocational rehabilitation professionals in the wake of COVID-19. **JOURNAL OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION, (Preprint), 1-9.**  
[content.iospress.com/download/journal-of-vocational-rehabilitation/jvr201119?id=journal-of-vocational-rehabilitation%2Fjvr201119](http://content.iospress.com/download/journal-of-vocational-rehabilitation/jvr201119?id=journal-of-vocational-rehabilitation%2Fjvr201119)

The COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on how work is conducted in the American economy creates a unique opportunity to re-examine the importance of universal design (UD) as a way to respond to a workforce that is growing more diverse and living longer with disabilities. UD is a set of strategies that creates places and resources that are accessible to all and considers the needs and wants of people from the outset. Through the use of UD, work environments can be more accessible and useable to all employees. This article describes the changes in the experience of disability within the context of

COVID-19 and defines UD and UD for learning principles. The authors consider how UD reduces stigma and reduces the need for individual accommodations while promoting inclusivity and improving productivity in the workplace. The article offers strategies for embedding UD into vocational rehabilitation from pre-professional training to practice, all with a new sense of urgency and opportunity that is present as a result of COVID-19.

## **RECENT ARTICLES:**

Carlson, Sarah R. "**Pre-Employment Transition Services: What Secondary Special Education Teachers Need to Know.**" INTERVENTION IN SCHOOL AND CLINIC, 2021, online ahead of print.

Friedman, Carli, and Mary C. Rizzolo. "**Value-Based Payments: Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Quality Indicators Associated with Billing Expenditures.**" INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES, vol. 59, no. 4, 2021, pp. 295–314.

Greco, Chelsea E., David R. Strauser, Sa Shen, John F. Kosciulek, D.G. Strauser, and Brian Phillips. "**Understanding the Impact of Functioning on Career Factors for Individuals with Disabilities and Criminal Backgrounds.**" JOURNAL OF OFFENDER REHABILITATION, vol. 60, no. 6, 2021, pp. 359–374.

Harris, Jason. "**How I Use SDM in My Own Life: SDM and Me.**" JOURNAL OF DISABILITY POLICY STUDIES, 2021, online ahead of print.

McGinley, Jacqueline, Christina Marsack-Topolewski, Heather L. Church, and Victoria Knoke. "**Advance Care Planning for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: A State-by-State Content Analysis of Person-Centered Service Plans.**" INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES, vol. 59, no. 4, 2021, pp. 352–364.

Nowrouzi-Kia, Behdin, Nirusa Nadesar, Yingji Sun, Markus Ott, Gobika Sithamparanathan, and Priya Thakkar. "**Prevalence and Predictors of Return to Work Following a Spinal Cord Injury Using a Work Disability Prevention Approach: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis.**" TRAUMA, 2021, online ahead of print.

O'Hara, Nathan N., Dionne S. Kringos, Gerard P. Slobogean, Yasmin Degani, and Niek S. Klazinga. "**Patients Place More of an Emphasis on Physical Recovery Than Return to Work or Financial Recovery.**" CLINICAL ORTHOPAEDICS AND RELATED RESEARCH, vol. 479, no. 6, 2021, pp. 1333–1343.

Orbai, A.M., S.M. Reddy, N. Dennis, R. Villacorta, S. Peterson, L. Mesana, S.D. Chakravarty, et al. "**Work Absenteeism and Disability Associated with Psoriasis and**

**Psoriatic Arthritis in the USA—A Retrospective Study of Claims Data from 2009 to 2020.** CLINICAL RHEUMATOLOGY, 2021, online ahead of print.

Rosenstein, Emilie. **“Activation, Non-Take-Up, and the Sense of Entitlement: A Swiss Case Study of Disability Policy Reforms.”** SWISS JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY, vol. 47, no. 2, 2021, pp. 241–260.

Scheef, Andrew R., and Michelle McKnight-Lizotte. **“Utilizing Vocational Rehabilitation to Support Post-School Transition for Students with Learning Disabilities.”** INTERVENTION IN SCHOOL AND CLINIC, 2021, online ahead of print.

Schillaci, Rebecca S., Caroline E. Parker, Meg Grigal, and Maria Paiewonsky. **“College-Based Transition Services’ Impact on Self-Determination for Youth with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.”** INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES, vol. 59, no. 4, 2021, pp. 269–282.

Schwartz, Ilene S., and Elizabeth M. Kelly. **“Quality of Life for People with Disabilities: Why Applied Behavior Analysts Should Consider This a Primary Dependent Variable.”** RESEARCH AND PRACTICE FOR PERSONS WITH SEVERE DISABILITIES, 2021, online ahead of print.

Schwartz, Naomi, Ron Buliung, and Kathi Wilson. **“Experiences of Food Access Among Disabled Adults in Toronto, Canada.”** DISABILITY & SOCIETY, 2021, online ahead of print.

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